New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1948

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NEW YORK TIMES — NEW YORK MIRROR
NEW YORK SUN — NEW YORK STAR — NEW YORK POST

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"Heaven on Earth"

The Sun

SEPTEMBER 17, 1948

By WARD MOREHOUSE

Tap Is Back—in Dull Show.

There has been something of a clamor for the return of the old-fashioned hoofing show and "Heaven on Earth," put on last night at the Century, brings in a lot of tap dancing. No complaints thus far. It's dancing, however, that goes along with a shoddy book and a dreary score. The estimable Shubert attorney in the seat just behind me had a good time, but I didn't.

"Heaven on Earth" is a clamorous and aimless song and dance piece, a show that pounds along for a couple of hours, using up the energy of a big company, the patience of the dance director, and quite a chunk of the money of Monte Proser and Ned C. Litwack. The new project at the Century has comedians but little comedy; it is noisy but never funny.

Peter Lind Hayes, playing a benevolent hack driver who goes to the aid of a young couple—the boy is an ex-G. I. living in a tree in Central Park—is a night-club wag of great popularity. Upon the stage of the Century he is genial and hospitable, but the complicated and disconnected libretto of "Heaven on Earth" frequently leaves him standing foolishly around. When he turns to his own specialties, and he probably does so with relish and a certain desperation, he is excellent.

David Burns is a good comedian. You know that if you saw him in "The Man Who Came to Dinner" or "Make Mine Manhattan," but in "Heaven On Earth" he is merely loud without being funny. They just didn't write him a part. Dorothy Jarnac is a bird-like sprite and her pantomimic dancing is quite enchanting.

Pretty Barbara Nunn, making her Broadway debut, sings pleasantly. Claude Stroud is mildly amusing as a policeman with no liking for a job. Dorothy Keller is a spirited dancer and Wynn Murray strives here and there to enliven the proceedings. Monte Proscer's Copacabana girls are good looking and Raoul Pene Dubois's settings are costly and elaborate and somehow seem appropriate to the general hodgepodge.

"Heaven On Earth" has that tossed-together look, and regardless of the time, money and talent—Eddie Dowling's included—that have been used in its preparation. A boisterous and labored musical show in which a lot of hearty tap dancing is wasted.

'HEAVEN ON EARTH.'

HEAVEN ON EARTH, a musical comedy. Book and lyrics by Barry Trivers; music by Jay Gorney; entire production supervised by Eddie Dowling; directed and lighted by John Murray Anderson; dances and lyric numbers staged by Nick Castle; scenery and costumes by Raoul Pene du Bois; musical arrangements by Russell Bennett and Don Walker; vocal arrangements and direction by Hugh Martin; musical conductor, Clay Warnick; produced by Monte Proser, in association with Ned C. Litwack. At the Century Theatre.

James Aloysius McCarthy	Peter Lind Hayes
Friday	Dorothy Jarnac
Punchy	Danny Drayson
Fannie Prohibiter	Caren Marsh
Florabelle Prohibiter	Ruth Herman
Mrs. Prohibiter	Nina Varela
Commissioner Prohibiter	Irwin Corey
Officer Clabber	Claude Stroud
John Bowers	Robert Dixon
Mary Brooks	Barbara Nunn
Lieut. Sullivan	Wynn Murray
Officer Jonesy	Dorothy Keller
Officer Blandings	Betty George
Sailor	Billy Parsons
H. H. Hutton	David Burns
Magistrate Kennedy	Dick Bernie
Sailor With Trumpet	Steve Condos
Officer O'Brien	Bert Sheldon
Radio Engineer	Jack Russell
Slim	Rami Martel
Dippy	Jack Russell
Butch	Bill Hogue

DAILY NEWS

SEPTEMBER 17, 1948

'Heaven on Earth' Promises Well But Disappoints in Performance

By JOHN CHAPMAN

One of the peculiarities of show business is that there is a difference between a list of entertainers and an evening of entertainment. On paper, the musical which opened last evening at the Century Theatre—wishfully titled "Heaven on Earth"—looks to be in the paper bag. Practically everybody connected with its production and performance is celebrated in one way or another and it should be delightful.

But in performance it becomes a lead-footed affair. Instead of enjoying myself—which is my main reason for going to the theatre, and yours, too—I spent most of last evening worrying about all the people who had put up the money and all the nice people who were doing the work.

The producer was Monte Proser, impresario of a very popular night club. The supervising director was Eddie Dowling, a gifted gentleman of the stage. The director under the supervising director was John Murray Anderson, a reformed art dealer who has been staging successful extravaganzas since the first "Greenwich Village Follies." The sets and costumes were by Raoul Pene duBois, whose decors from "Jumbo" on have been fabulous.

Top-Flight Participants.

To go on with the list: Nick Castle, an able hoofer, has staged the dances; Barry Trivers, a screenwriter with a lot of credits, has written the book; Russell Bennett and Don Walker, two of the best in their field, have orchestrated the music, and the music is by Jay Gorney, who has been writing tunes here and in Hollywood since some of Mr. Anderson's "Follies" and the delightful "Americana."

And we haven't yet got to the entertainers. How about David Burns, who didn't want to buy the underwater pen in "Make Mine Manhattan"? How about Peter Lind Hayes, the night club fireball? Or Irwin Corey, the delightful little nut from the Bronx? Or Claude Stroud, the remaining Stroud twin?

One couldn't ask for much more than these—or find them adding up to less than they do in "Heaven on Earth."

In the show The Boy lives in a tree in Central Park because he is poor, and The Girl is poor if beautiful. Befriended by a hansom driver on the Plaza rank, they get married and spend their nuptial period in a sample house erected as an exhibit for the public. The builder of the house gets sore and has them arrested—and before you know it, all I want to do is go home.

A Dancing Pixy.

The one good conceit of "Heaven on Earth" is overplayed. Mr. Hayes, the cabriolet chauffeur, has a pixy secretary, named Friday, who, unlike Mr. Winchell's famed secretary, can't even talk or write. She dances. She says everything very clearly by dancing it, but she talks too much. Even so, Dorothy Jarnac helps "Heaven on Earth" quite a bit in the role of Friday.

Mr. Burns' role as the modern house builder is played with a fine W. C. Fields air, but Mr. Burns gets into a deal of book trouble. Mr. Hayes does some of his night club turns, including his imitations of movie stars and the punch-drunk fighter routine. Mr. Corey is forced to do the same act twice, once in the first half and again in the second under another name; and in the first act he is quite funny as a demented housing commissioner.

But the show does not come together, and here I am worrying about a lot of nice people. I much prefer the artless charms of the show which opened the night before, "Small Wonder." And I haven't heard a good new tune yet this season.

New York Herald Tribune

SEPTEMBER 17, 1948

= By HOWARD BARNES =

Paradise Lost

MUSICALS being the order of the autumn, a boisterous saga of Central Park has opened at the Century. "Heaven on Earth" has the affable Peter Lind Hayes in a wheel horse job, an energetic and comely chorus, a somewhat frightening decor by Raoul Pene DeBois and assorted slapstick situations. Unfortunately it is more noisy than tuneful; more corny than comically inventive. There is a charming sketch in which Hayes, playing a cabbie, dictates a letter to Dorothy Jarnac, his bird cage girl secretary, with soft shoe routines and she reads it back in a dance pantomime. The gay and disarming mood of that fragment rarely extends to the other scenes. Before the ending the production becomes definitely ponderous.

* * *

There is a lot of show at the Century. Sixteen comedians, dancers and singers assist Hayes in unfolding a plot of sorts. John Murray Anderson has employed his expansive hand on the staging and lighting, while Nick Castle has designed dance numbers ranging from soap box hopping to a frenzied boogie woogie extravaganza. That their collaborative efforts must be set down as less than successful is chiefly due to an uninspired book and ordinary songs. Barry Trivers had a good idea in having a cabbie rescue a homeless veteran from a tree, arrange his wedding and find him a prefabricated house right in the park, but it has gone badly awry. Jay Gorney has composed an engaging tune in "So Near and Yet So Far," but he has failed to add fetching companion pieces.

* * *

Hayes, who is better known in the night clubs than the theater, has small chance to demonstrate how competent he is at holding a musical comedy together. He is on stage most of the time, assured and pleasing, too frequently he is waiting for good material which never comes along. His scenes with Miss Jarnac are his best. Occasionally he turns ventriloquist, or mimics Hollwood stars. For some strange reason the actor is asked to play straight in sketch after sketch to comedians who are not by any means his peers. David Burns blusters as a prefabricated house builder; Irwin Corey practically knocks himself out as a city commissioner and Wynn Murray is breezy as a female cop. They do not sustain much merriment in "Heaven on Earth."

* * *

The romantic complications are handled nicely by Barbara Nunn and Robert Dixon. They are young, personable and know how to sing. On their initial Broadway assignment they are off to a good start in a poor vehicle. It is Miss Jarnac, without a word of dialogue, who succeeds in realizing wisps of fantasy in what should have been a light and impish entertainment. "Heaven on Earth" is something of an expanded cabaret show, without the good music and fresh gags that one might find in such an offering. It is strenuous, colorful and tedious.

The New York Times

SEPTEMBER 17, 1948

'Heaven on Earth' Opens at the Century With a Book by Barry Trivers and Music by Jay Gorney

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Although our stricken nation has only just recovered from "Up in Central Park," a little something has come to replace it. "Heaven on Earth," which opened at the Century last evening, sets a very high standard for mediocrity and drives all our happy dreams away. Shaking the dust off some long-discarded formulas, Barry Trivers has written a yarn about an Irish Robin Hood who lives in Central Park, doing mawkish good to anyone who can bear it, and Jay ("Brother, can you spare a dime") Gorney has fitted it to a remarkably undistinguished score.

As bard for the occasion Mr. Trivers has also accentuated the commonplace with nice ingenuity. "You are so near—and yet so far," he exclaims passionately in his bravura number. "Home is where the heart is," he declares dogmatically in another.

* * *

Quite a lot of honest citizens find themselves stomping around in the slush of this idyll. Peter Lind Hayes is the principal miracle-man who, as a sentimental cab driver, heaps love on the vagrants of Central Park and is loved mighty fine by them in return. Mr. Hayes appears to be an acceptable night-club performer who can do imitations and maudlin monologues. But he is a monotonous leading man for a musical show.

Dave Burns, an experienced showman, plays a secondary role as though he were imitating Al Jolson. As the romantic lovers of the fable, Barbara Nunn and Robert Dixon sing and act uncommonly well amid a whirlwind of clichés. But the only two performers who succeed in defeating the dullness of the material are Irwin Corey and Dorothy Jarnac. Mr. Corey is an extremely funny antic man who can turn the redundancies of oratory into something hilarious. And Miss Jarnac is a dancer of extraordinary eloquence. As a mute pixy who inexplicably worships the good father of Central Park, she dances her unspoken dialogue with sharpness and imagery. Miss Jarnac deserves a show intelligent enough to match her talents as a dancer.

* * *

There is one magical thing about dullness: it is infectious. Everyone gets into the act whole-heartedly. In performing the questionable service of escorting "Heaven on Earth" to a public stage, Eddie Dowling and John Murray Anderson have made the gaiety unbearable. And Raoul Pène du Bois, a genuine artist of recognized ability, has designed scenery and costumes that a honky-tonk might not willingly accept. If this is "Heaven on Earth," where do the sinners go?

New York World-Telegram

SEPTEMBER 17, 1948

'Heaven on Earth' Is Here at Last

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

When Peter Lind Hayes was lured from the night clubs into "Heaven On Earth," it was a one-way deal. For the most talented young comedian in the business, he brings the show warmth, humor and a Bing Crosby taciturnity.

What the show does for him is leave him standing around while other people vend their wares all over the stage. In the middle of the second act there is the first real taste of what Mr. Hayes can do, but it is 11 o'clock before he comes into his own. In both cases he has to fall back on his own club material.

Some of the other performers have better luck, but still others fare just as badly as Mr. Hayes. David Burns, first-rate actor as well as knowing comic, has to yell his lungs out to make anything of his material. On the other hand the show is a swell break for the dancer Dorothy Jarnac, and it lets Wynn Murray prove that a loss of weight need mean no slimming of singing talent. Irwin Corey shows to much better advantage than he has in clubs, though the virtues of his performance are his own insanities, familiar to night owls.

"Heaven On Earth" concerns a leprechaun-like cabbie who fixes up a homeless vet and his bride by moving them into a publicly exhibited prefabricated house. He lands them in jail, then gets them out by staging protest rallies.

Mr. Hayes is the generous light-headed hackman, pursued by a mute and pantomiming secretary danced by Miss Jarnac. The tour of the pair through the show is inevitably reminiscent of a similar relationship which enjoyed more graceful and pointed effect at the hands of David Wayne and Anita Alvarez in "Finian's Rainbow."

The present show is peculiarly slack. The story is undisturbing, and one feels it has not convinced the actors enough to let them convince an audience. "Heaven On Earth" not only lacks glamour, but it needs a course at a charm school. It has no taking ways.

In the Cupid department, Barbara Nunn and Robert Dixon are a pleasantly unelaborate young couple in love, who have a rather shrill way with the ballads. Claude Stroud is an agreeable park policeman, and Dorothy Keller brings a

"Heaven on Earth"—*continued*

wealth of animation to her dances.

There are a number of cheery tunes in the score, perhaps the best being "Applejack" and "First Cup of Coffee." Both, by no odd coincidence, are sung by Wynn Murray.

Miss Jarnac's work is the outstanding novelty of the show. An acrobatic ballet dancer and pantomimist, she is a genius at charades. There are times when she cannot let well enough alone, seeming to work too hard, but her gifts are distinct and unusual.

Irwin Corey scores here with the role of a demented housing commissioner and lawyer. His behavior is that of a man whose brain is made of pretentious cobwebs, but the character he evolves is wildly sincere.

When Mr. Hayes finally gets down to his imitations, he is on unshakable ground. His punchy Callahan monologe, so effective as a solo, seems hung on the outer wall of the show. For the rest of the time he is entirely ingratiating, wistful without being helpless, and appears willing to oblige beyond reason. It is a pity the show does not do more to use this personality.

New York Post

SEPTEMBER 17, 1948

A New Musical Comedy That Can't Get Started

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

The new season, I regret to inform you, continued to mark time at the Century Theatre last night, where quite a lot of money and talent were to be found in search of a show. The oddest thing about the enterprise called "Heaven on Earth," which was being unveiled there, is that it always seemed on the verge of getting started and never quite managed it. Everyone involved in the proceedings was eager, willing and ready to go, and no expense or enthusiasm was spared, but the result was almost steadily unrewarding.

"Heaven on Earth" is a fantasy, but a top-heavy one. There is a whimsical young cabman, who loves to fix up blighted romances, and an ex-GI, who lives in a tree in Central Park and is unable to marry the girl he loves because he has neither a house for her or a job for himself. The young cabman tries to arrange things by smuggling them into an exhibition model home, after an adventure with a lunatic housing commissioner, but a couple of hours and several night-club specialties intervene before the customary happy ending emerges.

The Framework

I tell you this plot in some detail, not because I think highly of it myself, but because there are signs from time to time that Barry Trivers, who devised it, originally had high hopes for it. My guess is that it couldn't have been anything exceptional at the start, and certainly it displays little merit as currently offered. Nor is it much more successful as a framework for the activity of the performers. Such an ordinarily skillful comedian as David Burns, and a fellow named Irwin Corey, who might be pretty funny, and another called Claude Stroud, whose comic potentialities I am less sure of, are on hand for the fun, but it is seldom forthcoming.

Peter Lind Hayes, a pleasant and talented young man from California, is also present in the role of James Aloysius McCarthy, who is not a leprechaun but a cabman, and, since Mr. Hayes is compelled by the plot to spend most of his evening as straight man to the eager but starved comedians, it has been found necessary to relieve him from his bondage by having him do his night-club specialties. He manages them cleverly, but they remain night-club specialties, and belong there. I suspect it may be a waste of time for him to imitate movie stars, since audiences, fearful that some of us might think they didn't recognize Ronald Colman or Peter Lorre, immediately applaud loudly, until you can't hear what he is saying anyway.

Dorothy Jarnac

The happiest member of the cast, by the way, hasn't a word of dialogue. It is Dorothy Jarnac, who plays a taciturn girl serving as Mr. Hayes' secretary and love interest. The best number in the show is one in which the young lady, known wittily as Friday, takes a dictated letter from her boss by dancing it out amid some excellent pantomime. Miss Jarnac handles her dictation with originality, humor and charm, and registers the resounding hit of the evening. There is more imagination in that episode than in all the rest of "Heaven on Earth."

As I say, there is a lot of talent involved. There is a pleasant absence of ballet, and some agreeably old-fashioned chorus hoofing. The music is all right, if far from memorable, and the settings and costumes by Raoul Pene Dubois are attractive and colorful. The trouble is that with such competent performers as the Messrs. Hayes and Burns on hand and a fine determination to be fresh and unorthodox on the part of the authors, stage directors and everyone else involved, "Heaven on Earth" still rarely manages to be anything but earthbound.

Journal-American

SEPTEMBER 17, 1948

A Show Not Worthy Of Starting A Season

By ROBERT GARLAND

Last night, at the Century Theatre, John, who loves Mary, followed Finian's rainbow up to Central Park. And what do you think he found? Heaven on earth! But not the real thing.

For the "Heaven On Earth" I refer to is a song-and-dance show produced by Monte Proser, the Copacabana man, in association with a Mr. Litwack.

In this "Heaven On Earth" which is not the real thing, John's family name is Bowers. And Mary's family name is Brooks. Finian McLonergan is H. H. Hutton, while Og, the leprechaun, is James Aloysius McCarthy and Susan, his dear little dumb girl, is Girl Friday. As for Central Park itself, I must say that it never looked less lovely.

Which reminds me that, the day after his "Hilarities" opened at the Adelphi, the Boy Scout Section of the Drama Critics' Circle suggested taking Morey Amsterdam aside and assuring him that vaudeville actually is dead. Well, Monte Proser should be taken aside and assured that a night club is one place, a theatre another.

And that, while "Heaven on Earth" might be all right in a basement after midnight, it is something else again in a playhouse before that witching hour.

While known technically as a "book show," with a catch-as-catch-can story pasted down by Barry Trivers, "Heaven On Earth" is really a floor show written unskillfully around the not untalented young floor-showman who is Peter Lind Hayes. This is not good, neither for the floor show nor the floor-showman.

The catch-as-catch-can story is pieced together from bits of the "John Loves Mary" from which the lovers derive their names, the "Finian's Rainbow" from which H. H. Hutton, James Aloysius McCarthy and the dumb Girl Friday are borrowed, and the "Up in Central Park" from which the locale stems. The rest is night-club stuff, transplanted.

At the Century Theatre, where no drinks go to your head and no smoke gets in your eyes, the night-club stuff seems no more worthy than the derivitive material with which it is surmounted. And the music attributed to Jay Gorney is no help to either. The songs, with lyrics by Barry Trivers, are lively without being actually alive . . .

I suppose that "So Near and Yet So Far" is intended to be the song hit. If it is not, there is no good reason for it to be reprised by Wynn Murray and Robert Dixon.

No, I am not prepared to retract my written words where the talents of Peter Lind Hayes are concerned. Grace Hayes' likable and gifted son has a flair for character studies and impersonations. But "Heaven On Earth" is not the vehicle in which they should be legitimately displayed. They, along with him, are deserving of a brighter and better setting.

Maybe Mr. Hayes is not yet ready for the almost prohibitive leap from a floor show in a night club to a stage show in a theatre. It could be that he has come up from the basement too soon. Right here and now, I wouldn't know. But I do know that young Peter Lind has more to give than he gave last night up near Central Park.

David Burns has my permission to return to "Make Mine Manhattan." Wynn Murray is best when you close your eyes and ears and think back to "Johnny One-Note." Dorothy Jarnac is a good Girl Friday. June Graham and Richard Darcy are wholesome looking sweethearts. And there's a low comedian whose name eludes me. He couldn't possibly be lower . . .

To look at, to listen to, the floor show posing as a book show is no good season-starter. In eight words, "Heaven On Earth" is nothing of the kind!

Daily Mirror

SEPTEMBER 17, 1948

'Heaven on Earth' Hardly That

By ROBERT COLEMAN

"Heaven on Earth," the new musical which Monte Proser and Ned C. Litwack brought to the New Century Theatre last evening, is hardly that. In fact, it was "He—," heck, at times. Author Barry Trivers and composer Jay Gorney set out to do a paraphrase of "Finian's Rainbow," and failed to find the pot of gold that is supposed to lie at the end of that spectral phenomenon.

Trivers introduces a Central Park hackie who, with the assistance of a baffling wackie, goes around looking for young couples to help. The wackie, who could be a pigeon right out of Cecil Holm's "McGarrity and the Pigeons," Bessie the Bird Girl, a sister to Finian's leprechaun or a modern dancer with the hives, is in love with the hackie and is well on the way to enticing him into double harness by the finale.

The hackie finds a young couple to help named John Bowers and Mary Brooks, because young couples that you want to help in plays somehow are usually called John and Mary. Anyway, by the time the last curtain falls, our John and Mary have found that goal of all young present-day stage couples — a house—a house just like you can win on the radio if you can tell what Little Bo-Peep lost or where Little Jack Horner sat.

When the book bogs down, which is often, the headliners in the cast just go into their vaudeville and nightclub routines, and then you get some real entertainment. Peter Lind Hayes, for instance, as the amiable hackie, is terrific when he tosses aside Trivers' script and slides into his hilarious imitations.

Dorothy Jarnac had the customers blistering their palms with her agile impersonations of an arty musical-comedy sprite. Barbara Nunn, Robert Dixon and Wynn Murray, commanders of the singing corps, made Jay Gorney's tunes sound like candidates for the Hit Parade. Claude Stroud, a persuasive light comedian, has little to do.

David Burns has been given a character by Trivers, but then he spends the rest of the evening as one character in search of an author. Dorothy Keller, Danny Drayson, Billy Parsons and Steve Condos head the hoofing brigade. Choreographer Nick Castle has tossed aside phony musical comedy ballet, in favor of some good old-fashioned time-stepping and acrobatic antics.

Raoul Pene duBois, who has designed some of our more elaborate and tasteful settings and costumes in the past, comes through this time with an amazingly disappointing performance. The musical arrangements by Russell Bennett and Don Walker and the vocal arrangements by Hugh Martin merit salutes, particularly the latter.

The best thing about the evening at the Century was the audience. We only wish "Heaven on Earth" had been half as wonderful. The first nighters fairly knocked themselves out applauding. They apparently had a swell time and were not backward about letting the producers and the cast know their sentiments. We regret that we could share their enthusiasm only intermittently. For us, there was too much flicker for a clicker.

***NEW YORK* STAR**

September 19, 1948

Notes on a Night With the Sandman

By JOHN LARDNER

If you like a bargain, friends, repair without delay to the Century Theater, hard by the lazy glades of Central Park, where they are practically giving away the biggest sleeping pill in town. This giant, or economy size, barbiturate became available Thursday night, when a number of talented chemists took the wraps off their new formula, which goes by the name of *Heaven on Earth* and is not dissimilar in effect to the bite of the adult tsetse fly.

No expense has been spared in making the new musical comedy both a rich and a powerful narcotic. The producer is Monte Proser. Eddie Dowling supervised, John Murray Anderson directed, and Raoul Pene Dubois did the settings and costumes. In the flesh, if I can use a wakeful word like that without misrepresenting the atmosphere, you get Peter Lind Hayes, David Burns, Wynn Murray, Irwin Corey, Dorothy Jarnac, Claude Stroud, June Graham, Richard Darcy, and hordes of other soothing elements. What you have there, in fact, is the all-America team of sandmen for 1948.

At the end of the first act, by way of ramming their point home, the manufacturers have arranged to have the characters on the stage curl up and go to sleep in front of one of Mr. Dubois' restful sets. The curtain is then lowered with surpassing gentleness, so as to make it unanimous onstage and off. Since the scene of the story is Central Park, and the theater abuts that pleasure ground, it may be said that every living thing between 58th Street and 110th is safely in the land of nod by 9:45 p.m.

• • •

The plot of *Heaven on Earth* does not in itself account for the bland quality of Mr. Proser's new syrup, although it has that touch of whimsy in it which often works better than a blow on the head with a blunt instrument. A park cabby (Mr. Hayes), of Hibernian persuasion, assists a homeless ex-GI and his girl friend in getting married and finding a roof, right there in the park, under which to capitalize on his boon. The hacker himself, at the final curtain, is moving drowsily toward a union with a park sprite (Miss Jarnac) who loves him because he can imitate film stars, play poker and pool, and perform on the Spanish guitar.

It seems possible that Barry Trivers, author of the book, and Jay Gorney, composer of the tunes, had their sights fixed on the kind of jackpot that was hit two years ago by *Finian's Rainbow*. The moral is—and you students of form had better jot this down on the margin of Jack's Green Card—that a musical fantasy with Irish overtones is not a sure winner every time out. It has to be in shape. *Heaven on Earth* is a stiff, as the horse-players say, because its jokes are old, its music, apart from one or two songs, sounds as though it had been written on tracing paper, and its dance numbers are routine and brassy.

• • •

Right at the start, Mr. Hayes sets the comic pace with a joke about some pigeons he is training to throw peanuts to people. A little later, in the course of an imitation of a punch-drunk fighter, he scrapes this one off his chest.

Manager—"He hasn't laid a glove on you yet."

Fighter—"Then you better keep an eye on that referee. Somebody out there is beating the hell out of me."

That one has been told in every winning Republican year since McKinley's time. Its recurrence at this juncture would seem to make Dewey a shoo-in. Mr. Hayes is a versatile comedian, all right, but he cannot gain any ground by running all his plays straight at the old man with the scythe.

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There is one very nice moment in *Heaven on Earth*, when Mr. Hayes dictates a letter with his feet and Miss Jarnac reads it back in pantomime. It's a peaceful number, but droll and stimulating as well. Once it is out of the way, they pass the opium and tuck you in, and the next thing you know, it's a week from Tuesday.

"Small Wonder"

Daily Mirror

SEPTEMBER 16, 1948

'Small Wonder' At Coronet Clicks

By ROBERT COLEMAN

"Small Wonder," an intimate revue which George Nichols 3rd brought to the Coronet last night, is by all odds the best of this season's shows to date. It is a great improvement on what has preceded it, and restores some of this blase first-nighter's-optimism regarding the future.

We think producer Nichols made a big mistake in asking a $6 top for the new arrival, in view of the fact that you could buy the Hartmans there last season for a $4.80 top. The Hartmans, plus four of the year's smash song hits. We might be willing to recommend "Small Wonder" to you if the tariff were $4.80 or under, but we cannot honestly do so when there's a six-buck tap.

Star of "Small Wonder" is Tom Ewell, whose face can talk more expressively than the average comedian's lips. He can tell a story with his facial muscles alone. Remember his wonderful performance in "John Loves Mary?" Ewell is a most ingratiating emcee, and capitalizes on all the comedy material that falls his way.

Next to Ewell, we liked best Mary McCarty. She is an attractive young lady, who has a way with a laugh and a song. In fact, we were astonished to see so comely a femme in so arty a show, for the artier they get the fewer the pretty girls they usually feature.

Other standouts in the cast are Alice Pearce, Mort Marshall, Tommy Rall, Marilyn Day, Joan Mann, Chandler Cowles, Jonathan Lucas, Kate Friedlich and J. C. McCord.

Miss Pearce is much more amusing in her current vehicle than she was in "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'."

Ralph Alswang has designed a simple, inexpensive production, using a permanent background and a few set pieces. Director Burt Shevelove has used the limited decor to best advantage. The sketches, by Charles Spalding, Max Wilk, George Axelrod and Louis Laun, range from so-so to hilarious.

The lyrics, by Phyllis McGinley and Billings Brown, are more intelligent than those you're likely to hear in most revues. The music by Baldwin Bergersen and Albert Selden was composed to be useful, to further lyric and idea values rather than to crash The Hit Parade.

"Small Wonder," in sum, has much to recommend it: youth, imagination, exuberance and speed. But, in our opinion, it hasn't quite enough for a $6 hit. The customer is entitled to more when he lays out that kind of dough. Even during an inflationary cycle.

'SMALL WONDER.'

SMALL WONDER, a revue in two acts and twenty scenes. Sketches by Charles Spalding, Max Wilk, George Axelrod and Louis Laun. Music by Baldwin Bergersen and Albert Selden. Lyrics by Phyllis McGinley and Billings Brown. Produced by George Nichols 3d; staged by Burt Shevelove; choreographed by Gower Champion; scenery and lighting by Ralph Alswang; costumes by John Derro; orchestrations by Ted Royal; orchestra conducted by William Person; vocal arrangements by Herbert Greene; musical development for dances by Richard Priborsky. At the Coronet Theatre.

PRINCIPALS—Tom Ewell, Alice Pearce, Hayes Gordon, Joan Mann, Chandler Cowles, Virginia Oswald, Evelyn Taylor, Mary McCarty, Tommy Rall, Jonathan Lucas, Alan Ross, Jack Cassidy, Bill Ferguson, Marilyn Day, J. C. McCord, Kate Friedlich, Mort Marshall, Joan Diener, Devida Stewart.

***NEW YORK* STAR**

SEPTEMBER 17, 1948

'Small Wonder' Is Witty and Skeptical

By JOHN LARDNER

There is some pretty funny stuff in *Small Wonder*, a musical revue which opened at the Coronet Wednesday night and put the new theatrical season back on the rails. The season, you may remember, began officially a week or so earlier, but was last seen lying flat on its side about ten feet from the roadbed.

You would not call *Small Wonder* an intimate revue, or a little revue. It displays a herd of nineteen performers, supported closely by four or five sketch writers, two composers, two lyricists, and a full complement of designers, choreographers, orchestrators, and ground keepers. It is not small, but it is fast on its feet. It has the quality every good revue should have: it sticks to one point of view, one mood. The mood in this case is skeptical, as might be expected at the present pass in the affairs of men.

No one in the world of art is more obscure than a writer of sketches for revues, unless maybe it is a writer of screen plays. Yet nowadays, when you can take good dancing and singing almost for granted in the theater, a revue stands or falls by its writing. So it gives me pleasure to report that the writers of *Small Wonder*—named Charles Spalding, Max Wilk, George Axelrod, Louis Lann, and Richard F. Maury—are successful in about half of their numbers, which is a very fair average.

Even when the point of a sketch is old, woolly, or slightly invalid, these boys manage to pump enough funny lines into it to make you laugh—though not, mark you, uncontrollably. Their style is light and wry rather than full-bodied. The players are a good match for the style.

As the Normal Neurotic, an actor named Tom Ewell strays mildly around the stage, more or less holding things together. It is useful for a revue to have this element of straw in the bricks, but it happens that Mr. Ewell, who did a good comic job last year in the play *John Loves Mary*, is better as an actor than as a commentator. Also, his master-of-ceremonies material is soggy. Therefore, the high points of *Small Wonder* are four sketches in which he is able to play a part, along with such gifted confederates as Mary McCarty, Alice Pearce, Mort Marshall, Chandler Cowles, and Joan Mann.

In one sketch, Mr. Ewell sends the message of democracy abroad by radio, packaged in a soap opera which nearly breaks the heart of Miss Pearce, a peasant stomping grapes in a tub somewhere in Europe. The second big number kids the books on the best-seller list. The third is the best burlesque I have yet seen on the stage of magazine advertisements. The fourth and funniest, *The Happy Ending*, shows a motion picture coming to its climax in three different styles, respectively Continental, British, and Hollywood. Here Miss McCarty—a brunette who has, well, call it "everything"—excels herself by blending the finer points in the acting techniques of Caulfield, Bacall, and Grable.

There are several song numbers in the show that I liked, too. Miss McCarty, whom I liked pretty steadily all evening, was in three of them, *Flaming Youth*, *Saturday's Child*, and *Ballad for Billionaires*. Another was *The Commuters' Song*, which is a springboard for the lyrics of the noted poet, Miss Phyllis McGinley. The singers play up to Miss McGinley with the old Gilbert-and-Sullivan trick of pausing to grope for a rhyme. Just as you know in advance, however, in Gilbert, that nothing can rhyme with "lot o' news" but "hypothenuse," you know damned well when Miss McGinley speaks of a "South Oranger" that she has got to come across the plate sooner or later with "porringer."

My heroine, Miss McCarty, incidentally, has a sinister background. As a child, she teamed with Jane Withers in support of Shirley Temple. Other players in *Small Wonder* were scooped off the campuses of Yale, Sarah Lawrence, Rollins, Spivy's Roof, and the Blue Angel. Maybe those are the playing fields on which the next battle of Broadway will be won.

New York World-Telegram

SEPTEMBER 16, 1948

'Small Wonder' Not A Very Big Wonder

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

A pervading collegiate manner about "Small Wonder" ought to be captivating but is more often just amateurish. The cast of this new intimate revue is talented, and the occasional high points are sharp and witty. Except for these peaks the material is uninspired and lackadaisical.

Attention wanders away from the stage at numbers based on bare subjects rather than ideas that get anywhere. In these interludes the otherwise enthusiastic performers can only look baffled.

That expert, easygoing comedian, Tom Ewell, gives the show a meandering continuity as a "Normal Neurotic" who suffers in the puzzlement of everybody's worries. Toward the end of the performance he leads two of the funniest pieces in the program, one depicting the devastation wrought by ads couched in expletives, and the other a satire on various happy endings of movies.

Doesn't Beg Guffaws.

He helps unmask best-selling novels in another very funny sketch, and otherwise expounds the beefs of the average man. He has the grace rare among modern comics, not to beg guffaws when his material is mellow rather than witty.

Alice Pearce, known for her light-headed songs, has some appropriate verses as an ice-cream saleswomen who hopelessly confuses an elevator operator with her fancy flavors. She proves herself a splendid pantomimist, garnering big laughs while she stomps on grapes in a vineyard, or appreciates her children as a retired messboy.

Mary McCarty, an up and coming comedienne if there is one around, suffers only from a temptation to be too boisterous. She razzes the flapper to a fare ye well, but her dry humor is at its best in the clipped flat readings she gives the happy finale of a monstrous technicolor epic.

The Catchiest Tune.

Marilyn Day has a fresh and impertinent air for leading the vocals of four of the chow's numbers, among them the "Commuters' Song" which is the catchiest tune in the score. Joan Diener sings richly as a luscious bride in a pointless number, and Virginia Oswald leads the final item on the bill.

There are several excellent young dancers in the cast, though none of them gets the chance he deserves. Joan Mann and J. C. McCord do some dramatic leaps in a variation of "No Time," and Kate Friedlich and Tommy Hall, in separate numbers, acquit themselves expertly on the same assignment of wooing by show-off terpsichore.

Soon after the opening there is a flashy number, cutting and novel, that gives higher promise than is later fulfilled. It is a disposition of dudish Texas billionaires.

Its rootin' tootin' melody and narritives are ably projected by Miss McCarty, by Mort Marshall and Chandler Cowles who brighten several other sketches, and by Hayes Gordon whose full-blodded singing is generally lost in the shuffle of the show.

"Small Wonder" is certainly an affair of good intentions, but its few inventive moments make the bulk of the revue all the more forgettable.

DAILY NEWS

SEPTEMBER 16, 1948

'Small Wonder' a Youthful Revue With Some Sharp, Witty Skits

By JOHN CHAPMAN

In December of 1947 a little show calling itself "Angel in the Wings" moved into the Coronet Theatre and surprised itself by staying there until just recently. Now, at the same store on 49th St., is another little show titled "Small Wonder," which I should like to recommend to people who don't demand everything but would like something.

"Small Wonder" comes closer to being a revue than its recent predecessors in the revue field have come, because it has a critical viewpoint. Its final sketch, imitating Russian, British and Hollywood movies is wise and critical and very funny.

"The Happy Ending," this sketch is called. It is three treatments of the movie plot about the poor musician and his girl friend. The Russkys play it heavy (or maybe they are French); the Britons play it for a dish of tea and the Hollywoodians play it for Technicolor. The heroine in the Hollywood version is a worse actress than Betty Grable and Judy Garland combined, if that is a human possibility.

Relies on Charm.

"Small Wonder" is happily titled because it does not promise much—so when it falls down it can't be stomped on and when it is good it is charming. It is good oftener than it falls down and it has a company of young people who can sing and dance and act in sketches all in the same evening.

I'd say that the only department in which "Small Wonder" is short is the tune department, but this is nothing new in the musical comedy business of these times. The melodies of Baldwin Bergersen and Albert Selden are at best pleasant, but scarcely deserving of the lyrics provided by Phyllis McGinley and Billings Brown.

There is a fine amount of imagination and humor in Ralph Alswang's settings, and they are very cleverly made to work rapidly on a revue stage. The dance numbers (and practically everybody in the company dances) are fresh and lively, and are a credit to Gower Champion. The sketches, along with the lyrics, are intelligent and amusing. And the costumes, by John Derro, are perfect.

In addition to the movie skit, I'd recommend a number in which a young man reads the ads in the Saturday Evening Post and the ads are acted out for him. Itches, bladder trouble and all the other ills devised by the copywriters are hilariously presented. In another sketch, humorously critical as a revue skit should be, various types of best-selling novels are given a rough going-over.

No Chorus, No Stars.

Mr. Derro, the costumer, shines particularly in a Texas number called "Ballad for Billionaires." Miss McGinley, the lyrist, sparkles in the "Count Your Blessings" opening number and in a song called "Saturday's Child." Mr. Brown, the other chief lyrist, gets a good deal of fun out of "William McKinley High."

There is no chorus in "Small Wonder" and there are no stars. It's just a company of young and amiable people. Tom Ewell meanders through the show as The Normal Neurotic, reading ads, playing music or commenting on life. Alice Pearce frequently livens affairs with her funny face and her funny voice, and has a sketch of her own. The girl I liked best last evening was Mary McCarty, who can sing a ballad or be funny as occasion demands, and I also admired the dancing of Jonathan Lucas and Kate Friedlich.

After the usual bum start, the new theatrical season is picking up speed. "Small Wonder" is a nice revue and something new to see.

The New York Times

SEPTEMBER 16, 1948

AT THE THEATRE

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Unfortunately the wonders of "Small Wonder" are uniformly small and become uniformly monotonous. Neither the writers nor the performers have scope enough to break the mood. As put on at the Coronet last evening, the town's newest musical revue has considerable virtue within its small compass. The tone of the satire is intelligent. The staging by Burt Shevelove is keenly planned. The scenery by Ralph Alswang and the costumes by John Derro are in the best modern taste: they are vivid without opulence.

Although the performers are guilty of the atrocious crime of being young, they are not only attractive but talented, which is an original combination. Mary McCarthy, Marilyn Day and Virginia Oswald are the cream of the new crop in singers, and all the young men look healthy, with good muscle tone and satisfactory metabolism. The age group is so modest that Tom Elwell, the sharp-pointed comic, turns out to be the grand old man of the production. And Alice Pearce, the chinless buffoon, assumes the duties of Beatrice Lillie and Gertrude Lawrence as mistress of the revels.

But for a full evening in the impudent Broadway district you need something more overwhelming than good manners and skill in the little things. You need more size and experience in the cast and a chance to laugh from the diaphram.

For purposes of entertainment, the sketch writers assume that modern life is no better than a bed of neuroses. They discharge some neatly worded lampoons at the wealthy Southwest ("get your carcass down to Nieman-Marcus"), at the anachronism of the human body in an age of yearly improvements, at the standard brands of novel-writing, the pompous clichés of the advertising racket and the squalid stereotypes of motion-picture producing.

No matter how intelligent this kind of satire may be, it has a flat sound when it is not matched off against something coarser and brassier. And it begins to sound very close to snobbery as the impeccable evening skips along. Some learned pedant has recently published a book about irony with the fairly pompous title of "The Dry Mock." There is more than a dash of the dry mock in "Small Wonder," and it can leave a theatre-goer thirsty for the flesh-pots and loud vulgarities of less fastidious merry-go-rounds.

New York Herald Tribune

SEPTEMBER 16, 1948

= By HOWARD BARNES =

Slightly Wonderful

A SMART, exuberant revue has come to the Coronet to give the new season a welcome impetus. "Small Wonder" is full of bounce and wry humor. The sketches are nicely satirical, the songs are adequate and the performing is generally persuasive. When Tom Ewell, Alice Pearce or Mary McCarty are on stage there is rarely a dull moment in this George Nichols 3d production. Numbers might have been trimmed to advantage. A few might have been quietly dropped in try-out. But on the whole the musical has a freshly sophisticated quality which pervades even the so-so interludes. Enthusiasm and talent strike a happy balance in "Small Wonder."

* * *

There is a large cast for an intimate revue. Three different dance teams take turns at strutting their stuff. There are singers of all styles, ranging from Marilyn Day and Miss McCarty to the irrepressible Miss Pearce, while assistants are always on hand to give color and variety to the various numbers. What is most important is the fact that Ewell keeps wandering through the proceedings as the "normal neurotic," giving point and laughter to the travesties and keeping the proceedings in a vague continuity. His dissertation on the human body, his take-off of radio numbers in "Democracy" or his lampooning of advertising slogans are elegantly amusing, particularly when Miss Pearce joins forces with him. The latter would scarcely seem to need good material, what with her sure sense of timing and pantomime.

* * *

Charles Spaulding, Max Wilk, George Axelrod and Louis Laun are responsible for the sketches. They have viewed the passing scene with somewhat ironic amusement, whether they have been examining best-sellers or foreign and domestic motion pictures. Lines have bite and the tableaux have considerable dramatic punch. It is only a pity that they did not edit their material more stringently. They have done better, at that, than the two composers, Baldwin Bergerson and Albert Selden and the lyricists, Phyllis McGinley and Billings Brown. "Ballad for Billionaires," "When I Fall in Love" and "Saturday's Child" are catchy. Most of the songs are on the undistinguished side.

* * *

Burt Shevelove has directed "Small Wonder" with more attention to detail than cumulative pace. There are times when the show sags rather badly, particularly in the "Nobody Told Me" wedding number. Fortunately the movie take-off, "The Happy Ending," is a captivating climax for the doings. Of the many players not mentioned already, Hayes Gordon, Joan Mann, Mort Marshall, J. C. McCord and Chandler Cowles are to be accorded a special vote of thanks. Most of the performers are young, vital and expert. They make the most of every opportunity for creating gayety and a lively mise-en-scene. Ralph Alswang's sets and lighting effects, incidentally, are unpretentious and fetching. "Small Wonder" has an uneven texture, but it is made of good material.

The Sun

SEPTEMBER 16, 1948

By WARD MOREHOUSE

'Small Wonder' No Riot.

"Small Wonder," bustling in from the road, set up shop last night at the Coronet Theater and it brings in a lot of youth and spirit, but it's a revue that never gets going.

It's willing and earnest—and semi-amateurish.

Not a big show, this "Small Wonder." It's done in gay colors and bright costumes and its theme is one of satirizing the American scene. There are jabs at the best-seller crazé and commuting and radio commercials, all of which are more than a little bewildering to Mr. Ordinary Guy, who wanders through the show. He is a philosophical commentator and also a worrier and his reactions to the complexities of everyday life are given as those of the Normal Neurotic.

George Nichols 3d and his associates had an idea in putting this new revue together and some of the sketches start promisingly enough, but several of them finish with a thud. The lyrics of Phyllis McGinley and Billings Brown are lively, if somewhat labored, and most of the music written by Baldwin Bergerson and Alfred Selden is decidedly unexciting.

The evening's best numbers are the "Happy Ending" interlude, the "This Is an Adv.," and the Great Southwest skit, "Ballad for Billionaires." The company's principal asset is Mary McCarty, who has poise and style. She is a lively and appealing performer. Marilyn Day is helpfully about. Hayes Gordon sings well and Virginia Oswald is vocal and decorative in the finale. Alice Pearce gets in a good evening's work, but I'm still not overpowered by her ways with comedy.

The droll, deadpan Tom Ewell, given to ambling, to pausing, to staring, plays the baffled Neurotic, but he is no more than partially successful in his philosophizing and his material frequently becomes pretty flat. I'll take Tom Ewell in "John Loves Mary."

"Small Wonder," striving for freshness, has a few zestful moments—they are generally Miss McCarty's—but it's a revue that starts and stops. In an intimate-type show more distinctive material is needeed. Also, better comedy and comedians. A lot of this revue is silly, even absurd.

"Small Wonder" doesn't come off.

New York Post

SEPTEMBER 16, 1948

An Uneventful Revue Called 'Small Wonder'

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

The intimate satirical revue is such a rare and welcome phenomenon in the current theatre that a new one is bound to be greeted with eager anticipation. Last year there two such excellent examples of the school as "Angel in the Wings" and 'Make Mine Manhattan" (which was at least fairly intimate), and this season there was reason to hope that "Small Wonder," which opened last night at the Coronet, would be another. But once more good intentions proved not enough, and the new revue was merely so-so entertainment.

It has its points. It is always amiable, there are some pleasant people in the cast, and there are a few properly amusing moments. Most of the sketches, though, are lacking in sharpness and humor, and the music is neither tuneful nor interesting. Even when the satirical ideas are sound, they tend to suffer from an inability to come to any sort of a satisfactory climax, drifting off into rather aimless endings. Then, too, Tom Ewell, who is the focal point of the proceedings, was considerably happier when he was in "John Loves Mary."

Tom Ewell

That is not to dismiss Mr. Ewell's value to "Small Wonder." He is a pleasant and ingratiating comedian, of easy expertness and likeable ways. As a quizzical and worried young man, described in the program as a normal neurotic," he wanders broodingly through the revue, pondering the mysteries of advertising, movie happy endings, the radio, the best sellers, divorce and other puzzling examples of our civilization. The only trouble is that, since the satirical thrusts in the show are not very pointed, Mr. Ewell's easygoing comedy tends to make the lack of bite all the more noticeable.

There are just about three numbers in the revue that struck me as possessing the proper quality. The first is about the cowboy millionaires on a luxurious dude ranch, the second hits at the vulnerable target of magazine advertising, and the third glares at the merry endings of the American motion picture. In both the dude ranch and the movie episodes, the success is in great part due to a pretty and engaging girl comic named Mary McCarty, who attracted attention in the luckless "Sleepy Hollow" last season. It is clear that she is decidedly a performer to be watched.

The Girls

In particular, when she mocks the uncomfortable histrionics common to such Duses of the screen as the Misses Turner, Bacall, Scott and Lamour, Miss McCarty proves herself a satirical comedienne of talent and intelligence. Then there is a pleasant young soubrette in the person of Marilyn Day, who adds handsomely to the liveliness of a frequently desultory evening. On the other hand, there is also in evidence Alice Pearce, who can hardly be numbered among my heroines. Certainly she must be funnier than she seems to me.

Many of those present at the opening of "Small Wonder" gave every sign of enjoying themselves hugely, and they couldn't all have been backers. The dances seemed to come in for especial admiration, although they struck me as strenuously commonplace. It was my unhappy lot to find the hard-working satirical efforts of those concerned with the making of the new revue almost steadily unavailing, with hardly anything of the style, imagination, humor and point necessary for success. The season hasn't yet got properly started.

Journal American

SEPTEMBER 16, 1948

'Slick' Seems Word For This New Revue

By ROBERT GARLAND

Slick, I'm pretty sure, is the word for the "new musical revue" which, after a period of processing in New England, follows the dear, departed "Angel in the Wings" at the Coronet. It, too, is an intimate and intelligent little show in which, as puller-together, young Tom Ewell is expected to equal two Hartmans and one Hank Ladd.

That Mr. Ewell almost succeeds in doing exactly that speaks well for the not too pretty fellow who made a name for himself as the caviar-eating buddy of the John who loved Mary all last Winter on Broadway. It's his performance, I wouldn't be surprised which furnishes the title of the Coronet's slick and span new occupant.

And, which may not be the tactful thing to say, Mr. Ewell is at his best when "Small Wonder," as a "new musical revue," steps to one side to permit the first of its featured performers to sound off on his own. As the Normal Neurotic who could be Philip Wylie's alter ego, he discourses on what are, to him, the follies of the Atomic Age.

The Human Body, out-moded as it is. Democracy, and how to broadcast it across the world. Best-Selling Books, and how to avoid reading them. And the curious American Cult of Mom.

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Songs Like Corn Flakes

Apart from young Tom Ewell, who goes in for being homespun, "Small Wonder" makes up in slickness what it lacks in iconoclasm and a good round tune to whistle as you leave the auditorium in which, only the other evening, "Civilization," "The Thousand Island Song" and "The Big Brass Band from Brazil" were like corn flakes in the air.

There's slickness in the "Ballad for Billionaires" and "The Commuters' Song." There's slickness in "No Time," with its three singing-dancing variations. There's slickness in "Badaroma," which closes the opening act. And in "Nobody Told Me," which opens the closing one. But slickness is neither an iconoclasm nor a good round tune.

For me, there's greater pleasure in Mary McCarty and her take-off on "Flaming Youth," even if it does come close to Joan McCracken's better one in "Billion Dollar Baby." And in Tom Ewell's "This Is an Adv.," which isn't unfamiliar, either. And in "The Happy Ending" where the entire company takes the pictures for a ride.

And even in "Pistachio," where Mort Marshall manages to be amusing right in the face of the Alice Pearce who can't get a laugh out of me, no matter how hard I try to help her.

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As Good as Starred

In the supporting cast—in spite of the billing on 49th st., Tom Ewell is as good as starred in "Small Wonder"—it's Mary McCarty who walks, sings and dances away with the secondary honors. And it's her solo, "Saturday's Child," with words and music by Phyllis McGinley and Baldwin Bergersen, that's the top song of a none too tuneful score.

Hayes Gordon, of the "Sleepy Hollow" which slept down to its title last season at the St. James, is a stalwart upholder of the outfit. Tommy Rall's another "Small Wonder"-boy to keep your eye on. Especially when he's dancing. And every time you look up at the stage it seems as if Mort Marshall were doing something good and helpful.

The new girls, like their "new musical revue," are slick. What's more, they're easy on the eye. And that's a fact John Derro, the costume man, has well considered. Ralph Alswang's scenery is also on the slick side, as is his lighting. Ditto for Gower Champion's choreography. And Burt Shevlove's direction. And William Parson's orchestra. And——

Yes, slick's the word for "Small Wonder." Yet, after giving slickness all its due, the un-slick Tommy Ewell is the major one to bring the minor nonesuch of the title to the Coronet's young show.